SOCI-3113-SA   **Media, Culture & Society**

Classes (days/times): May 1-22, 2013; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday, 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Our class time will be divided into two 70-min. sessions, with a 10-min. break in between

Location: AT-1005

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Course website: http://misina.ca/sociology (file password: sociology)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of SOCI 3113 is twofold: (1) to offer a conceptual understanding of mass media from a uniquely sociological viewpoint; and (2) to consider the principal issues of contemporary media in the context of Canadian society and culture. Thus, on one hand, the course will be focused on defining the media, understanding its principal structural elements, and considering its power and effect; on the other, the course will explore the media as an integral part of Canadian society's cultural makeup and assess critically some of the most important aspects of media's role in and impact on creating and shaping the parameters of what we come to recognize as ourselves, our culture and our society.

As indicated by its title, the course is focused on exploring the three foundational sociological categories: 'media', 'culture', and 'society'. The basic assumption behind the course is that these categories cannot be understood separate from on another, and that — in light of the course's theme(s) — understanding media as a socio-cultural reality of contemporary society ultimately rests on coming to terms with media's nature, logic of operation and effects within the context of something sociologists label as 'culture' and 'society'. Media, in other words, is not a universe onto itself, separate and independent from society and its cultural realities. Rather, it is something that both creates and is created by society and its cultural demands and, therefore, something that has to be examined and explained as one of constitutive parts of the larger realities of society and its culture. Thus, the objective of the course is to explore various relationships and connections between media, culture and society, and offer an understanding of how the working of society and its culture informs and is informed by the working of the media.

Our exploration of media, culture and society will take two forms: conceptual and practical-empirical. The purpose of the former is to provide a general theoretically-informed framework for understanding media and its relationship to culture and society, while the purpose of the latter is to look at specific issues of media and culture as they pertain to Canadian society. In addition, the objective of the conceptual exploration of media, culture and society is to provide an analytical lens through which the practical realities of Canadian society and its media and culture can be understood in sociologically meaningful ways.

The issues of media, culture and society are alive, dynamic and vibrant, and the most effective way to explore them is through dialogue and exchange of ideas. SOCI 3113, therefore, is constructed as a combination of formal lectures and structured class discussions/debates. The aim of the lectures is to provide the foundation for constructing a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of — and interrelationships between —- media, culture and society from a uniquely sociological viewpoint. The purpose of class discussions/debates is to create an interactive learning environment for hands-on

sociological explorations of specific practical issues and problems of media and culture in the context of Canadian society. All students are expected to take an active role in class discussions/debates.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of the course is to provide students with a comprehensive sociological understanding of the issues related to media, culture and society. By the end of the course, the diligent student will possess a considerable theoretical, conceptual and practical-empirical competence in looking at/thinking about media, culture and society from a uniquely sociological viewpoint, as well as have developed sensibility with regards to the main practical issues/problems of media, mass communication and culture in the Canadian context.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

We will be using the following required textbooks:

- *MediaMaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (2nd ed.), by Lawrence Grossberg *et al*. Thousands Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2006. ISBN: 9780761925446

- *Canadian Communications: Issues in Contemporary Media and Culture* (2nd ed.), by Bohdan Szuchewycz and Jeannette Sloniowski (eds.) Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2002. ISBN: 9780130905840

Any additional reading materials will be posted on our course website: **http://misina.ca/sociology**.

As the course in great measure relies on your active interest and participation, you are expected to have read your weekly assignments *before* coming to class.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your performance in the course will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

OPTION 1	OPTION 2
Midterm Exam (30%): May 7	**Midterm Exam** (30%): May 7
Final Exam (35%): TBA	**Final Exam** (35%): TBA
Reflective Commentaries (15%)	**Reflective Commentaries** (15%)
Class Participation (20%)	**Class Participation** (10%)
	Presentation (10%)

Both **exams** will be a combination of definitions and short-essay answers. Please note that *there will not be any multiple choice or true/false questions*. There will be some choice regarding the range of possible answers. You will be responsible for course readings, lecture materials, and anything else presented during our class time. There will be a pre-exam review session with the purpose of clarifying difficulties and problems encountered during your preparation for the test.

Reflective commentary is a one-to-two-page written reflection *on the discussion readings* (from *Canadian Communications* textbook). With the exception of Day 1, Day 7 and Day 11 (when you do not have to submit it), the commentary **is due at the beginning of every class** (this is **not negotiable**). The purpose of the commentary is (1) to offer your own thoughts about sociological claims presented in the readings, and (2) to formulate three discussion questions about what you find to be the most constructive, or problematic, aspects of the claims/points made in the readings. In formulating your questions you have to explain their importance in terms of the key issues, problems and/or questions considered in the general readings (from *MediaMaking* textbook).

To write a successful reflective commentary you should follow these five steps:

(1) read assigned chapter(s) from *MediaMaking* and understand the main conceptual/theoretical points

(2) read discussion articles from *Canadian Communications* and understand the main issues/problems addressed

(3) think about the issues/problems addressed in *Canadian Communication* in light of the conceptual points discussed in *MediaMaking*

(4) offer *conceptual* — i.e. sociologically relevant — reflections once you are comfortable with step 3

(5) formulate three discussion questions and explain their sociological relevance, keeping in mind the general theme of the class for which you are writing your commentary

Please keep in mind that **reflective commentary is not about summarizing the articles** but about offering your own sociological take on the main points raised in the discussion readings.

The length of each commentary should not exceed two pages of typed text, using 1.5 line spacing and 12 pt Times New Roman font. Please corner-staple your commentary and do not use paper clips, plastic covers or binders. In the interest of environmental responsibility, avoid using a cover page and put your name and your student ID number in the top-left corner of page 1.

The purpose of **presentation** (for **Option 2**) is to provide a brief summary of the discussion readings, isolate their most important points/arguments, and offer critical reflections on their principal lines of argument. We will use the presentation as a jumping off point for our class discussions/debates. The presenter should be able to situate the ideas in the articles within a general conceptual framework offered in the corresponding readings in *MediaMaking* and also be prepared to engage other students' questions and comments during our class discussion. The presentation should not exceed 15-20 min. in length: no more than 5 min. should be spent on a brief summary of the articles' main points and arguments; additional 10-15 min. should be used for the critical assessment of the readings.

> **Important**: The purpose of the presentation is not to regurgitate uncritically the contents of the articles but to initiate a distinctive kind of learning process through dialogue and exchange of ideas with your classmates. Thus, the focus should be not on presenting a summary of absolutely everything mentioned in the articles but on discussing — in your own terms and the level you feel comfortable at — the readings' most pertinent and thought-provoking aspects. A very good presentation may not necessarily be the one that is most pedantic but the one that is most successful in generating constructive discussion and eliciting reactions from your audience. Also, the presentation that is not read but narrated, as it were, is generally more engaging. Strive to communicate with rather than read to your audience. If you must read, remember that reading a page of text requires about 3 minutes. Finally, keep in mind that presentations are *not* designed to substitute for other students reading the articles. Thus in preparing your exposition you should presume that other students are familiar with the readings and their main arguments.

Participation mark is a reflection of your *active and meaningful* input in our class discussions and debates. *Passive classroom presence does not warrant any participation marks.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following grading scale will be applied in evaluating your course work:

90-100% (A+)
Outstanding Performance: superb mastery of the principles and materials treated in the course; exceptional fluency in communicating that mastery and a high degree of originality and independence in applying material and principles.

80-89% (A)

Excellent Performance: comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course; fluency in communicating that knowledge and originality and independence in applying material and principles.

70-79% (B)
Good Performance: thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

60-69% (C)
Satisfactory Performance: basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

50-59% (D)
Marginal Performance: adequate understanding of most principles and material treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

40-49% (E)
Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

1-39% (F)
Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

0% (F)
Academic Dishonesty: demonstrable violation of the academic rules of conduct as defined by Lakehead University academic standards.

Your grade is a reflection of your performance in the course, which is the only criterion for your final mark. *There will be no rescaling of grades at the end of the course* and no adjustments except for legitimate clerical errors. Please take note of that.

According to Lakehead University defined standards, grade 0-49% constitutes unsatisfactory academic performance and means failing the course; 50-59% is a minimally accepted level of performance for passing the course, while 90-100% constitutes outstanding performance. For details on evaluation and grading see your Lakehead *University 2012-2013 Academic Calendar*, section University Regulations (V Standing).

If you wish to review your course work you can do so within *two days* from the day the marks have been posted.

GENERAL POLICIES

Academic Statement: Each student is asked to submit a brief statement about his or her academic background as it relates to the Sociology program in general and this course in particular. The statement should be accompanied by either your recent photograph or a photocopy of your Lakehead University student ID card.

Email: Emailing is to be regarded as an official form of communication. Only emails sent through Lakehead University account will be read and replied to. All other email messages will be ignored.

Cell phones: Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

Notebooks/portables: Use of notebook computers and/or portable devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

Audio/video devices: Use of audio/video recording devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend, you are expected to arrive on time and be respectful to other students in class. Disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behaviour in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students engaged in such behaviour will be dealt with accordingly.

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Disclaimer: The information in this Course Outline is subject to change; any changes will be announced in class.

Day 1 (May 1)	Course introduction; syllabus walk-through; introductory review
Day 2 (May 2)	**General reading:** • "Narratives of Media History" (Chapter 2 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Canadian Identity: The Shifting Terrain" (Chapter 4 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Canadian Film: Not Coming to a Theatre Near You" (Chapter 6 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 3 (May 6)	**General readings:** • "Media in Context" (Chapter 1 in *MediaMaking*) • "Media People and Organizations" (Chapter 3 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Canadian TV: Is Anybody Watching" (Chapter 5 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Stern Radio: Taming the Shock Jock" (Chapter 18 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 4 (May 7)	**General reading:** • "Media and Money" (Chapter 4 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Media Ownership: He Who Pays the Piper" (Chapter 11 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Corporate Sponsorship: Something for Nothing" (Chapter 22 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 5 (May 8)	**General reading:** • "Media and Politics" (Chapter 11 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Media Bias: Slants on the News" (Chapter 10 in *Canadian Communications*) • "History for Sale: Let the Buyer Beware" (Chapter 24 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 6 (May 9)	**General reading:** • "The Media, the Public, and Normative Theories" (Chapter 12 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "The Writing's on the Wall: Youth Culture in Canada" (Chapter 9 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Public Relations: The Canadian Spin" (Chapter 23 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 7 (May 13)	**PRE-EXAM REVIEW** **MIDTERM EXAM**

Day 8 (May 14)	**General readings:** • "Meaning" (Chapter 5 in *MediaMaking*) • "The Interpretation of Meaning" (Chapter 6 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Language and Ideology: Newspeak and Bafflegab" (Chapter 2 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Into the Heart of Africa: Museum Pieces" (Chapter 15 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 9 (May 15)	**General reading:** • "Ideology" (Chapter 7 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Language Laws: Speaking of the Distinct Society" (Chapter 1 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Political Minorities: The Invisible Man (sic)" (Chapter 14 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 10 (May 16)	**General reading:** • "Producing Identities" (Chapter 8 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings:** • "Gender: Speaking of Girls" (Chapter 12 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Race: Stereotypes and Appropriations" (Chapter 13 in *Canadian Communications*)
Day 11 (May 20)	**VICTORIA DAY: NO CLASS**
Day 12 (May 21)	**General reading:** • "Consuming the Media" (Chapter 9 in *MediaMaking*) • "Media and Behavior" (Chapter 10 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion readings**: • "Advertising in Canada: Kidstuff" (Chapter 21 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Canadian Notes: Singing a Different Tune" (Chapter 7 in *Canadian Communications*) (**optional**) • "Media Violence: Remote Control and Twitch Instincts" (Chapter 19 in *Canadian Communications*) • "Censorship: Hate in the Media" (Chapter 20 in *Canadian Communications*) (**optional**)
Day 13 (May 22)	**General reading:** • "Media Globalization" (Chapter 13 in *MediaMaking*) **Discussion reading:** • "Cultural Policy: A Taxing Issue" (Chapter 17 in *Canadian Communications*)